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SERIES

AUGUST

VOL.  
12.

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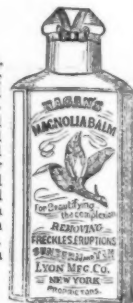


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## A NARROW ESCAPE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "DEATH DOWN," "NO ALTERNATIVE," &c. &c.

### CHAPTER XIX. "MY ONLY FRIEND!"

THERE is after this no more pleasure, no more confidence, no more unrestraint in the intercourse between the two cousins. The bitter fruits of the mistake they make in not coming to a full explanation are these. The girl thinks he judges her cruelly for that by-gone folly, while on the other hand Frank firmly believes, from her manner, from her confusion, from her halting admissions and reserve (which, according to the almost invariable habit of women, she maintains in the wrong place), that, though May has "nothing extenuated," she has "set down naught in malice," in all that she has said and implied respecting Kate.

It is natural, under these circumstances, that Frank should be desirous of getting himself back to town with as little delay as possible. No good end can now be attained by his remaining here. Estranged from Kate, suspicious of her, doubtful now of what her motives may have been all along, bitterly condemnatory of her as he is, he still loves her so much better than he loves anyone else, that there is actual pain to him in her presence. While, as for her, she is beginning to despise him for what appears to her to be mere conventional cowardice, and to feel positive shame for having allowed herself to love "so slight a thing."

Therefore he stands not much upon the order of his going, but goes, after a few strained sentences to Kate; a few words of interest and affection, too carefully chosen for her to believe them genuine, or to prize them in the lightest degree.

"You know that I shall always feel the keenest interest in your welfare, Kate, dear," he says, rather hoarsely, just before he goes, "if I ever can help you, you'll let me, won't you?"

"I think you can help me best by forgetting me, Frank; I want to ring out the old, and ring in the new; our ways in the world will be very widely apart in the future, and we had better not put the stumbling-block of any recollections of one another in our paths. I know you mean kindly now, and I know you have always meant kindly, but——"

"I wish to Heaven we had never met, and I wish more fervently still that we were not compelled to part," he says, brokenly.

"But it's inevitable," she breaks in, and then she bends her pride to say,

"Let my aunt think of me as she has always thought of me, will you; unless May," (and now there is a little jealous bitterness infused into her tone) "unless May has done her best—and worst—already!"

It is vain after this to say anything more. The man goes back to his wealthy, well-secured, and most wearisome fate, and the woman takes up the burden of life again, not even saying, by way of sadly consoling herself, "it might have been," for something whispers to her that, hard as it is, it is better so.

"When the cottage is let, and the furniture sold, and the half-pay that is due paid in to me, I shall have about two hundred pounds," Kate says to Mrs. Angerstein about an hour after Frank has left them. She has spent this hour in making calculations, for calculations about the future are pleasanter companions than are the memories of the past.



"That won't last long," Mrs. Angerstein, who has been accustomed to spend two hundred a year on her own dress, answers dolefully.

"Oh! yes, it will last us till we can look round and see what we can do, or till the will is found," Kate says hopefully, while Mrs. Angerstein melts into tears that are partly due to a burst of grateful feeling towards Kate for so evidently intending to share her cruize of oil with the widow and fatherless, and partly to a hopeless conviction that there will be no finding of any will, and that the wronged will never be righted.

"When you go back to Dunster what shall I do?" she asks hysterically, "you are my only friend."

"While you feel that, Cissy, you shall go wherever I go, and share whatever I have," Kate responds promptly, though she cannot help feeling that the phrase, "You are my only friend," falls with the glibness of custom from Mrs. Angerstein's lips. "To how many other people has she said it, I wonder?" Kate thinks cynically. "Well! I'll accept the post willingly enough till she finds a better one."

There is a hollow form of apparently friendly intercourse maintained still between the widow and Doctor and Mrs. Angerstein. But the latter lady is longing to throw off the mask and throw down the glove, and do open battle if need be with the sister-in-law whom she has always doubted and disliked, and over whom she would now ride rough-shod if she dared, in a way that is felt by all the others, but that cannot be defined and consequently cannot be openly resented. Mrs. Angerstein, the wife, makes manifest that she considers herself rather too pure and good to be brought into close contact with Mrs. Angerstein, the widow. What she says to her husband in the privacy of domestic life they do not know, but they perceive that the unhappy man becomes daily more and more embarrassed and constrained, and every word of kindness, every little act of attention which he gives and pays to his unhappy sister-in-law now is given and paid surreptitiously.

"We have made up our minds to go home to-morrow," he explains nervously to poor Cissy as he manages to get her alone with him one morning; "but, before I go, my dear, I want you to understand that if I alone were concerned, there should be no difficulty about this business; but you see there are others, there are others."

He sinks his voice mysteriously as he says this, and Cissy goes to him, and clasps her hands, and between the paroxysms of her sobs wails out an appeal to him to be merciful to her, and to her children, to remember his dead brother, to save her from despair!

Doctor Angerstein is a hard man about many things. He is also a hen-pecked husband; but he has a certain amount of human feeling about him, and all that he has is stirred now. He gives his sister-in-law one hasty kiss, he beseeches her "not to cry," and promises that he will "see what can be done, quietly, by her lawyer and himself." "No one must hear of this," he adds, energetically, and then he says something about "a trifle just for present expenses," as he takes his purse out, and extracts some bank-notes from it.

The transfer is nearly made, he is fluttering them towards her, and her hand is partly outstretched to receive them, when all his faculties are paralysed, all his generous intentions nullified by the basilisk glance of his wife. There is no mistaking the angry sparkles that scintillate from beneath those white eye-lashes. There is no mistaking the savage compression of the lips, or the lurid red flush that overspreads her face. Jealousy is reigning side by side in her heart with hatred, and Doctor Angerstein knows the domestic genius of his hearth and home too well, not to clearly understand that his powers will henceforth be more cramped than they have been heretofore.

"I was just going to send a trifle to the children, my dear—their uncle and aunt's parting gift," he explains, sheepishly, and he tries on what the effect of a little gay-hearted laugh may be. But his hand trembles so that the bank-notes rustle like aspen leaves, and neither of the women are deceived for an instant by the laughter.

"You needn't change a note for that," Mrs. Angerstein says, with suave spite. "I have plenty of silver" (as she speaks she takes three half-crowns from her purse), "just for them to buy a little toy to remember uncle and auntie by," she continues, tendering the money to Cissy, while her husband watches the scene, biting his lips, and being more thoroughly ashamed of himself and his wife than he has ever been before.

"The children shall come and take it from you themselves, and thank you for it, as you deserve to be thanked, and remember you, as you deserve to be remem-



bered by them," Cissy says; and her tears dry themselves as she speaks. There is something in her quiet air, in her gentle breeding, that almost crows the underbred shrew who is trying to trample upon her; and, under the smarting sense of inferiority, Mrs. Angerstein registers a vow that those three half-crowns shall be the sole pecuniary aid extended from her side of the house to "the creature" who had so nearly wheedled Dr. Angerstein out of those bank-notes.

It is vain, after this, to hope for better things, or to trust that an amicable and just arrangement may be come to between the defrauded widow and her grasping relatives. Dr. Angerstein makes one or two futile little efforts to see Cissy alone again; but Cissy's pride is in arms now. She will not go a step to meet him, and his wife watches him keenly, and is ready to intervene at any moment. So the time passes away very slowly and miserably, until the hour of their departure. Then Mrs. Angerstein fires her last and heaviest shot.

"I don't presume to offer you advice, Mrs. Edward," the well-off, vicious, secure married woman says; "but I must say that the world will have a better opinion of you, if you put a stop to the extreme intimacy which has grown up between you and this Captain Bellairs—so soon after your poor dear husband's death."

If there is one thing more infuriating than another to a woman who is deterred by circumstances from openly defending her position, it is this of hearing a man for whom she has a regard spoken of slightly as "this" so-and-so. Cissy Angerstein is no exception to this general rule. She feels wrath rising within her; for a few moments she strives to bridle it. Then the remembrance of all the wrongs she has suffered, of all the wrongs she may have to suffer in the future at the hands of this woman, who is longing to defraud, and judge, and condemn her, rises up and overbalances Cissy's always weak judgment.

"Happily for me neither you nor the world can put an end to that intimacy," she cries out shrilly in her injudicious rage, "You may rob me of everything else, but you cannot rob me of my only friend."

As she utters the last words Kate comes in, and hears them, and is touched by the piteous appeal of them, and the helplessness of the woman who utters them.

"They cannot rob you of your only friend, you're right, Cissy—but you are

worse than mean, and cruel, to try," Kate says, hotly, turning all the fire of her force upon Mrs. Angerstein, who replies as broken-down Cissy lapses into a state of general inability,

"How kind you are, to be sure, Miss Mervyn, such disinterested friendship deserves a reward; it happens though that Mrs. Edward wasn't speaking about you—to tell the truth she can hardly be said to have given you a thought—for she was speaking of Captain Bellairs, as 'her only friend.'"

The blow is well aimed, for it goes straight home to the very heart of Kate's pride. This man, who has nearly touched her to tenderness again, lately, by an exhibition of most touching tenderness on his own part towards her, has been at the same time making himself the "only friend"—the hope, and stay, and guiding star—of this frail, rudderless bark, which Kate has sworn to pilot, so long as she can keep afloat herself. He must have been deceiving her, he must have been playing a double game, or Cissy would not claim him as so entirely her own.

"Not that I would take him from her, not that I am ready to love him again, or desirous that he should love me again," she says to herself, and she tries to think that she is telling herself the truth. Only it is hard to be cut out by anybody. Fallen humanity cannot soar to the height of liking to be over-looked, or deserted, or befooled. Above all, it is hard to be cut out by one's own familiar friend, with whom one cannot quarrel without making manifest the cause of such quarrel to the whole world. Happily for the preservation of her own dignity, Kate bears these truths in mind, and putting a calm aspect on, restores Cissy to self-possession, and refrains from answering Mrs. Angerstein altogether.

"I have just been speaking to Captain Bellairs, Cissy," Kate says, as affectionately as if she were not already a little bit jealous of Cissy, "and he agrees with me, that you had better come back to Dunster with me, till I can settle my affairs."

"I shall be a burden on you," Cissy protests, though all the time she fully intends to go back to Dunster with Kate, and be a burden on the latter, until some brighter prospect opens. Nor must she be considered unduly selfish for intending to do so. We are all apt to absorb the aid that is offered us, and some of us are apt to forget that we have so absorbed it,

when something better turns up to supersede it.

So now, though Cissy protests, "I shall be a burden on you, Kate," she quite means to cast that burden on Kate's stronger shoulders, until such time as the will is found, or some other even happier fortune befalls her.

"I'll go and pack up some of our belongings," Kate says magnanimously in the evening, and she goes away to her self-imposed task, leaving Captain Bellairs and his troublesome charge alone.

To tell the truth, though the situation is embarrassing to them both, it is infinitely more embarrassing to the man than to the woman. He has begun to realise that Cissy's feeling for him is warmer than is well, and he greatly fears that in her weakness, shattered as she is by losses that are very grievous to her, she may betray herself in a way that will oblige him to be colder and harder to her than he desires to be. Impulsive as he is, he has never once been moved by any sort of feeling for the pretty woman by his side. It is terrible to him, therefore, to feel that she in her heart has gone so far beyond him. Terrible to him to fear that if he allows himself to show her the kindness he feels for her, she may misunderstand it and him, and exaggerate his motive and meaning.

He tries to lead her to speak openly and hopefully of her plans and prospects, he tells her as delicately as he can that he will secure the grand-children of his old friend, her father, such an income as will remove all fear "of their ever needing anything" from her mind; he entreats her to "continue to look upon him as her brother," and to his annoyance she remains profoundly dejected and reproachfully silent. He is giving much to her—time, care, consideration, affection, of a true order. But he is not giving her what she has weakly, vainly, suffered herself to believe he would give.

"I can't endure this close room any longer," she says with plaintive petulance after a time; "everything seems more gloomy and hopeless in it; will you take me for a little walk?"

"Yes, let us call Kate," he answers.

"No, no, if you can't go without Kate, I would rather stay here and broil," she says with a pout that compels him to resign himself to the inevitable and take her out alone.

"I want you to take me up to Lynton church-yard," she whispers, and he guides her up the hill gladly, feeling that there will be immunity from any display of tender feeling on her part, while they are by her husband's grave.

But "woman's at best a contradiction still;" by that grave she droops down helplessly on her knees, and sobs out in a paroxysm of love and remorse and despair,

"He's better dead, poor fellow; he'd have found out in time that I never really loved him. Oh, Harry! don't hate me and despise me."

#### ACCORDING TO MRS. GLASSE.

OUT of fourteen recipes connected with serving up poor pussy, in not one is Mrs. Glasse guilty of the joke, "First catch your hare." It is a libel. Some wag conceived it. Wilkes of 45, perhaps, who helped Johnson so assiduously to fine veal at Dilly's, and was so anxious to press a squeeze of orange upon him to give it zest. Or Paley, possibly, who uttered the celebrated growl, when all ears were strained to get the benefit of his venerated philosophy, "They've spoiled these puddens by not taking the seeds out of the raisins." Both these gentlemen were critical, it is clear, on the subject of cookery; and both of them grew hungry, and sniffed up the fragrance of roast and boiled gratefully, in the life-time of our gifted authoress. Both of them, consequently, may have opened the leaves of her savoury volume, with the increasing appetite for fun, and eating, that the department of literature in which she revelled so invariably provokes; and either might have been thereby stimulated to originate the taking piece of sport. Or was the author of it poor Tom Hood? That charming wit told his bride, silyly, when they were on their honeymoon, that she was never to buy plaice with red spots upon them, because they were all bad; and it would only have been in his vein to have further puzzled the young lady by telling her, when she proposed hare for dinner, that she must follow Mrs. Glasse's directions, and first catch it. At any rate, nobody need be ashamed of a slice of gaiety that passed current so readily for reality, and that has enjoyed such a long and merry life. It is true to nature; that is the reason of it. Much in Mrs. Glasse comes so very near to what she is said to

have said, it was a small thing to skip her boundary, and present her in just this other fashion. For instance, first skin your pig, is a command of hers, in all sobriety. Also, first wash your chickens; first make your stock with an old hen; first break the bones of an ox cheek; and first before you kill your hog, do so and so. Then another favourite beginning of hers is "get." Get a quart of cream, she says; get a penny loaf; get a quarter of a pound of rice; get half-a-dozen of Seville oranges; get a pound of suet; as as though the cooks of 1796 (the year the edition of her book under notice was printed) were likely to think they could make pippin jelly, hartshorn flummery, madling cakes, water sokey, wigs, caudles, cullises, amlets, bullace-cheese, or ragoos, without the certainty that the tempting ingredients would have, first, to be obtained. So also is the lady comic in many another matter. Her terms are, as it were imperiously, slit your ears, lay in your toasted head, wash your feet, blanch your tongue, take out your tongue, never put your livers in first, lay down your leg, take your palates, make your head very clean, flour your head, stew your muscles, bake your cheek, put your pettitoes into a saucepan; and she uses phrases that refer to such horrible articles as your pounded livers. At other times this murder-method runs off into the familiar and the jocose. The lady writes, almost with a wink, take a fat pig; cut off his head; slit and truss him up like a lamb; when he is slit through the middle and skinned, parboil him a little; then throw some parsley over him. Such expressions as stick your pig, spit your pig, scald your pig, bone your pigeons, hack your meat, scale your carp, slime your tenches, parboil your cocks'-combs, take your hare, cut your hare, take out your hare, cut your woodcock, run your knife, put in your skewer, fill your pie, bake your pie, cover your pie, quarter your apples, take your skirrets, put in your partridge, pick your birds, are so plentiful, they scarcely want looking for—they abound on every page. Nor was it surprising, for other reasons, that the cheerful Mrs. Glasse should have been twitted with going so far as her reputed little sarcasm. She has a good deal of killing to recommend over an animal; it was but one merry thought the more to suggest that she should catch it. Take a goose, kill, and hang it up in the feathers, is the preliminary to one of the dressings

she gives. So is, get the liver of the sheep, when you kill one. Kill your pig, she is obliged to say, when giving directions how to "collar" it; only, oddly, the killing is the first of the two operations! Kill a fine young roasting-pig, she orders; dress off the hair, and draw it; rip it open from one end to the other, and take out all the bones. She evidently thought it necessary to come in at the death, in order to be sure that the death was done. It is too clear that occasionally the little ceremony was omitted. In lobsters, this, manifestly; for, in the recipe how to roast lobsters, Mrs. Glasse (for a joke, it may be supposed) tells carefully how they may be boiled; and adds—this is as good a way, to the full, as roasting them alive, and not half the trouble, to say nothing of the cruelty! Yet the kind lady's boiling, when she calls it boiling, gives more modern folks a shudder. Take a lobster, she says, in two different recipes; if it be alive, stick a skewer in it, like a peg, to keep the water out, and boil it! Does it not make the wonder come whether, in the next century, there will be any boiling of any living creature—lobster, crab, shrimp, or what not? A peep into the past shows there has been some improvement; a peep into the future might show there will come a little more. It is obvious that there is room for it.

But the jovial Mrs. Glasse—bright, transparent, glittering creature as she should be, to fit her name—was only inhuman when she could not help it. She was obliged to tell people how to flay, and rasp, and singe, and chop, and bruize, and strain, and beat, and squeeze, and flatten. It was the sole object of her (literary) existence. Was it not her business to see that people gave no quarter—except of lamb, and of pounds of candied fruits and nutmegs? Go the whole hog was imperatively her motto—in forcing them, in ragooing them, in making them into tasty almond puddings. Cooks might not spoil broth whilst she was at their elbow; they must mince matters, they must make a hash of it, they must put things into a stew, send some of them to pot, and be absolutely certain what might and what might not be in a pickle. Besides, Mrs. Glasse could teach the most coaxing and charming arts when she had a chance. Coddle six large apricots, she says, with aggravating allurements, and take a nice little cabbage, and dry some of the finest flour, and make them

pretty thick with pippins, and fry a French roll and let it swim, and scrape off the soft of your quinces, and steep the crumb of white bread in a pint and a half of cream, and slit a half-penny loaf, and colour a pudding blue with the syrup of violets, and break in Naples biscuits, and beat almonds fine in rose-water, and having got the flowers of a peck of cowslips, do something mysterious with them, with the help of sixteen eggs and three pints of cream, and you will produce a cowslip pudding! And Mrs. Glasse taught how to make a floating island, a fish-pond, a hen's nest, a mouse-trap, the moon and stars in jelly, a desert island, gilded fish in jelly, orange loaves, German puffs, Carolina snow-balls, Portugal cakes, Dutch beef, Indian pickles, Italian pudding, Hanover cake, Hottentot pie, Spanish fritters, Oxford John, pigeons in Pimlico, Westminster Fool, Kilkenny tripe, Scotch chickens, peas Françoise, fairy butter, slip-coat cheese, solid syllabub, steeple cream, Angelica water, Miss in her teens, eau de luce, Lady Tilley's ball, syrup of peach blossoms, and almond milk, yet all were separate from moonshine, however much they might be mistaken for it, for moonshine has a recipe all to itself. Then the last touch of grace was understood by Mrs. Glasse. She advises pigeons to be sent to table with a sprig of myrtle in their bills, other sorts are to be garnished with a bunch of barberries; in making a hedgehog, out of enough sweet almonds, canary, orange-flower water, eggs, sugar, butter, and cream, to ruin a moderate housewife, a great effect is to be tried for, for people are to plump two big currants for the hedgehog's eyes. Then Mrs. Glasse writes—put nasturtium flowers on some dishes; put a flower of any sort at the top of others; spit ortolans sideways, with a vine leaf between; also, which is perhaps not so much a grace as an oddity, in making Florendine hare pull out the poor creature's jaw-bones and put them in its eyes. Garnishes of all kinds, in Mrs. Glasse's time, were important. Some of them were chesnuts and lemon, to oysters; horse-radish and lemon, to whiting; chaldron served up in saucers, to swan; quartered orange, to sorrel; boiled lettuces and spinach, to white barley pottage; fried oysters, to tripe; fried suckers and sliced onion, to calves' feet; lemon and beet-root, to lamb cutlets; truffles, morels, and mushrooms, to calf's head; parsley and red cabbage, to round

of beef; pickles and lemon, to fillet of veal; barberries, to tripe; horse-radish and beet-root, to mutton; lemon and pickles, to lamb chops; Seville orange, to pillaw of veal; cocks'-combs forced, to sweetbreads; fried brains, to pig matelote; boiled mint chopped, to stewed duck; slices of bacon, to boiled pigeons; hard eggs quartered, to small birds; water-cresses, to pheasants; roasted chesnuts, to plovers; quartered apples, to sausages; parsnips and potatoes, to salt fish; cucumber tops, to forced cucumbers; chines of lobsters fried and laid on end, and a variety of others. Some odd implements were required for the due performance of these mysteries. One was a mazarine, a second, most aptly, was a necromancer. Others were a halfpenny Welsh dish, and a silver sauce-pan (if you have it). Curious spellings, too, every here and there strike the eye. A coulis is a cooley or cullis, a béchamel is a bishemel, an omelet is an amlet, and once an alumet, a ragout is a ragoo, tourte is tort, a fricandeau is a fricando, a casserole is a casorole, rissoles are raisolds, a haricot gets two r's and loses its t; whilst pain is without its i and reads pane, and pulpeton and caromel remain as they stand, with no recognition whatever.

What is sauce for a goose is sauce for a gander, according to Mrs. Glasse. She makes no distinction. Sauce for a goose is her title, and her brief directions are, for a goose make a little good gravy and put it into a basin by itself, and some apple sauce into another. Sauce for a boiled goose (it is cabbage stewed in butter), sauce for a turkey, sauce for ducks, sauce for fowls, and sauce for pheasants and partridges. It is when Mrs. Glasse is penning sauce for a pig that her humour is regnant. She says, in her salient manner, there are several ways of making sauce for a pig; and she makes this a whole sentence, all to itself, oracularly. After it, she descends to particulars. Some, she says, do not love any sage in the pig, only a crust of bread. She is even with them, though, for this failure of affection. They shall have what is good for them, willy nilly. This is her method:—Then, she says, i.e. when some do not love sage in a pig, you should have a little dried sage rubbed and mixed with the gravy and butter! Is it not malicious? Just the revenge a cook can take upon other mortals; serving them up, and out, exactly as she pleases. Now for the other



ways of making sauce for a pig. Some love bread sauce in a basin, observes Mrs. Glasse. They may have it. Some love a few currants boiled in it, a glass of wine, and a little sugar. They may even have that. Others, continues the lady, take half a pint of good beef gravy, with sundry mentioned quantities of pig-gravy, pig-brains, butter, catchup, and sage. It is a very good sauce, is the lady's pronouncement. This, again, in a brief paragraph all by itself. And, N.B., some like the sauce sent in a boat; and Mrs. Glasse, being in a yielding humour, has no objection. Another instance of this queer brevity is in the instructions how to lard turkeys and pheasants. Larding being a difficult operation, requiring skill and method, long and full directions about it might be expected. Mrs. Glasse hits it off, fair and far, as with a Damascene blade. You may lard a turkey or pheasant, she says, or anything, just as you like it. It makes one look round astonished, and then comprehend the situation with a laugh. It makes one, also, remember the celebrated chapter once, *On the Snakes in Shetland*, or in *Iceland*, in *Ireland*, or somewhere. There are no snakes in *Shetland*, it read; and Mrs. Glasse's style matches it exactly. Shall any fresh instances be given? Yes; just two. Their richness is their warranty. To roast a leg of mutton with oysters, is the fair title of instance the first. The contents are: take a leg about two or three days killed, stuff it all over with oysters, and roast it. To roast a leg of mutton with cockles, is the corresponding title of instance the second. The contents of that are, stuff it all over with cockles and roast it. Nothing could be finer. The cook who should be the least bit wiser for the directions would be worthy to be the parent of twin sphinxes.

Sauces must have yet another word. Cullis, announces Mrs. Glasse, the Italian way; cullis being the coulis, or gravy, of recent mention. To make it people are to take it. This seems odd, but it is true. In the most bewildering manner Mrs. Glasse makes known that the way to produce this cullis is to put into a stew-pan half a ladleful of cullis. One can only shrug the shoulders and read on a little farther. The result is more bewilderment. Put also into the stew-pan half a ladleful of gravy (simply cullis translated), and—yet again—half a ladleful of broth. To have previously prepared the broth, and gravy, and cullis, into which to dip one's ladle,

must have employed powers equal to those requisite for obtaining the highest academical degree. But this is not the point. Neither is there allusion to this wonderful sauce, because, to flavour it, one must have essence of ham, sliced onions, pared lemon, beaten coriander-seed, garlic, sweet basil, mushrooms, and good oil. Attention is drawn because of Mrs. Glasse's conclusion. This sauce, she says, well on in the recipe, will do for two chickens, six pigeons, quails, or ducklings, and all sorts of tame and wild fowl. And then she finishes. Now this Italian, or French, sauce is saucy, she laughs out. And so is she; delightfully.

It is a pretty dish, coos Mrs. Glasse, over several of her preparations. Four-and-twenty blackbirds baked in a pie was a pretty dish, it will be remembered, to set before a king. We see the birth-time of the ballad, easily. It is a pretty middle dish for a second course at a grand table, or a wedding supper (this of "a desert island"); only, for the wedding supper, set two crowned figures on the mount instead of one. It is a pretty corner dish for dinner, cries Mrs. Glasse, of orange custard; and, this is a pretty thing to set off a table at supper, of fairy butter. So one might think. If you make them in pretty figures, there is written of "jumballs," they make a fine little dish. Then Mrs. Glasse brags of her stewed carp, it is a top dish for a grand entertainment. Some Panado, she recommends, is hearty and good diet for sick people. For making a rich cake she wants a pint of right French brandy. One of her recipes is to pickle the fine purple cabbage so much admired at the great tables. Another dish, a neck of mutton, called the hasty dish, was first contrived by Mr. Rich, and is much admired by the nobility. Some of the maddening directions for the arrangement of this are, hang the dish on the back of two chairs by the rim; have ready three sheets of brown paper; tear each sheet into five pieces; draw them through your hand; light one piece and hold it under the bottom of the dish; move the paper about, as fast as it burns; light another till all is burnt, and your meat will be enough. Fifteen minutes just does it—(and just does the cook too, one might fancy!) Serve it away hot, cries Mrs. Glasse over other things, with a brisk nudge. Serve it up quick and hot, is a variation of her bustle. The great nicety is to have them hot, is another. You may



carry it to the Indies, is praise she gives to some rare catchup. These are very pretty either at land or sea, she says of some dumplings. Put no water to the crust, she orders of raised pies, till the minute it goes to the oven; it is a great hazard of the pie running. And she is very particular about these raised pies. She calls them Yorkshire Christmas pies, and they are to contain a turkey, a goose, a fowl, a partridge, a pigeon, a hare, woodcocks, moor game, what sort of wild fowl you can get, and at least four pounds of butter—to say nothing of the butter in the crust, which is to be made of a bushel of flour! to which Mrs. Glasse appends, these pies are often sent to London in a box as presents, therefore the walls must be well-built. Nice Mrs. Glasse! In potting dripping, writes the comfortable lady, almost in contempt, if you wish to keep the rats away from it, the best way is to turn the pot upside down.

To broil weavers, is one of Mrs. Glasse's extraordinary suggestions. They are fine fish, she says, which is a little consoling; but you must take care not to hurt yourself with the two sharp bones in the head. What a very odd fish a weaver must be! The rice must not be boiled to a mummy, writes Mrs. Glasse, impetuously, when telling how to make a "pellaw" out of an old cock, skinned. You may lard your duck, or let it alone, just as you please; for my part I think it best without; is her singular (and grammatical) conclusion to twenty-nine lines of directions how to dress a duck à la Braise. *Probatum est*, she writes, in classic fashion, at the end of a medical recipe of anise-seeds and nutmeg.

First take out of your room all silver and gold lace, she says, in her advice how to keep clear from—bugs; adding, with terrible suggestiveness, if your room is very bad, a pound of rolled brimstone; if only a few, half a pound! Always when you sweep a room, is another direction to the housemaid, throw a little wet sand all over it, and that will gather up all the "flew" and dust. This causes a question; as housemaids certainly do not now throw wet sand over rooms when they are going to sweep them, is it because they sweep them oftener, before the "flew" and dust can so thickly accumulate? And if this is so, does it account for the rolled brimstone, if your room is very bad, and for half the quantity, if only a few? Possibly. But the enquiry shall not be pursued. It will be far more pleasant to turn Mrs.

Glasse's leaves, and find ourselves in another chapter.

This dish I do not recommend, declares the charming lady, at the end of the French way of dressing partridges; for I think it an odd jumble of trash, she pursues. By that time the cullis, the essence of ham, and all other ingredients are reckoned, the partridges will come to a fine penny; but such recipes as this are what you have in most books of cookery yet printed. And even all this is not enough for the excited authoress. Read this chapter, she says (it is the one of which the odd jumble of trash is the first article), and you will find how expensive a French cook's sauce is. They will use, she says again, as many fine ingredients to stew a pigeon or fowl, as will make a very fine dish, which is equal to boiling a leg of mutton in champagne. I think here is enough to show the folly of these fine French cooks; in their own country they will make a grand entertainment with the expense of one of these dishes, but here they want the little petty profit; and by this sort of legerdemain some fine estates are juggled into France. It is quite violent sarcasm, and no doubt was deep feeling arising from strong occasion. But there is yet more of it. If gentlemen will have French cooks, they must pay for French tricks, breaks out Mrs. Glasse in her preface. I have heard of a cook that used six pounds of butter to fry twelve eggs, when everybody knows (that understands cooking) that half a pound is full enough, or more than need be used; but then it would not be French! So much is the blind folly of this age, that they would rather be imposed upon by a French booby than give encouragement to a good English cook! That is genuine indignation, undoubtedly; yet it must have existed at the same time with marvellous self-blindness. If not, to what height could possibly French extravagance have amounted? An example shall be given of what a British cook expected to find in her cupboard, and then there can be some judging. To make a rich cake, begins Mrs. Glasse; and without diving into her particulars about work your butter to a cream with your hands, put in your eggs, shake your flour, and so on, there shall be just summed up the required ingredients. Four pounds of flour, seven pounds of currants, six pounds of best fresh butter, two pounds of Jordan almonds, four pounds of eggs, three pounds of sifted

sugar; half a pint each of orange-flower water, sack, and brandy; sweetmeats to your liking (they were what are now called candied peel, with a sufficient sprinkling of the condiments, mace, cloves, cinnamon, and nutmeg. Does it not seem as if that would come to a fine penny? Yet it is only a recipe of ordinary dimensions. Here is another: To make plum porridge for Christmas—apparently the same preparation as is known now as the lining for mince-pies. The manufacture requires a leg and shin of beef, six penny loaves, five pounds of currants, five pounds of raisins of the sun, two pounds of prunes, three pounds of sugar, a quart of sack, a quart of claret; and lemons, mace, cloves, and nutmegs. Then here is how to make a goose-pie. Half-a-peck of flour is to be put into a pan upon the kitchen table, with three pounds of boiled butter; then the cook is to “get” a pickled dried tongue, and lay it into a large fowl, and when the large fowl is thus raised to double its expense, she is to “get” a large goose and thrust the laden fowl into the middle of that. To give richness, an extra half-pound of butter is just to be laid upon the top, and then the cook may put on her pie-lid. This pie is delicious, cries Mrs. Glasse, with a relish; a slice of this pie cut down across, makes a pretty little side-dish for supper. Yes, so it ought; and a glance back at the contents of the Yorkshire Christmas pie, often sent to London, will afford another illustration of the cost of cookery in the last century, under the auspices of Mrs. Glasse. Some light word, surely, might be said about people who live in Glasse houses being the last who ought to fling a stone; but, possibly, breathing an atmosphere of puff paste, of flummery, and so forth, may make a farce seem a very trifle, may make a poor lady fritter away her judgment as well as her apples and plums, and the light word shall be withheld. Besides, the price of things must have altered enormously since Mrs. Glasse’s time, or else that crystal lady must have been a very bad arithmetician. To prove this, there shall be a list given of the requisites for some gravy, which she says she can “get” for about three shillings. Half-a-pound of ham (this is the order in which they come), a pound of veal, sixpenny-worth of beef, carrots, two onions, a bundle of sweet herbs, five blades of mace, six cloves, a spoonful of Jamaica pepper, half a nutmeg, a pigeon, half-an-ounce of

truffles, a crust of bread, an old cock beat to pieces (these poor old cocks!) three spoonfuls of catchup, and a glass of wine. And to prove that three shillings is no error of type or hasty composition, Mrs. Glasse says, at the foot of this long and impossible list, if you go to market (meaning if there is personal supervision of the expenditure) the ingredients will not come to above half-a-crown; adding—which certainly throws a great cloud upon her arithmetic—or for about eighteen-pence you may make as much good gravy as will serve twenty people. It is a puzzle, and must be left in its intricacy.

Mrs. Glasse’s book is not written in the high polite style—she says so. My intention, she says, is to instruct the lower sort; therefore I must treat them in their own way. Every servant who can but read will be capable of making a tolerable good cook; but great cooks have such a way of expressing themselves that the poor girls are at a loss to know what they mean. Mrs. Glasse, consequently, was familiar of a purpose, and must be forgiven. She had an eye to more intelligent folk too. One of her chapters is—Necessary Directions whereby the Reader may easily attain the polite and useful Art of Carving. This chapter teaches that the right terms were to cut up a turkey, to rear a goose, to unbrace a duck, to wing a partridge, to unlance a coney, to allay a pheasant, to dismember a hern (heron), to thigh a woodcock, to display a crane, and to lift a swan. The allusions, in these easy directions to curlews, plovers, snipe, mallards, bustards, capons, pheasants—to slitting, lacing, unfolding, raising, severing—to pinions, wing-pinions, loin-bones, breast, leg, back, and sent—the allusions, also, in another place, to such birds as teal, widgeon, bran-geese, wheat-ears, dotters, marle, knots, godwits, ruffs, and gulls, and shufflers—render Mrs. Glasse a little too confusing. She shall be silent again, close inside her neat calfskin covers. Did good digestion wait on appetite in her time? shall be the question, as she is tenderly put away.

### FROGS.

THE thought sometimes crosses the mind, who is Rowley? a question suggested by that famous lyric which begins

A Frog he would a-wooing go;  
Heigho, says Rowley!

We do not, of course, take exception to the frog going to woo; as such a step is

man-like, so it may be frog-like, for aught we know. But who is Rowley, and why does he interfere, and what does he mean by Heigho ! that the frog would a-wooing go.

Whether his mother would let him or no, denotes a somewhat saucy and disobedient spirit; but really these things so often occur in families, that it is no use to be over-particular. It is rather difficult to see in what sense he went wooing

With his roly poly, gammon and spinach ; but this is the means of bringing us to a knowledge of the Christian name of the mysterious Rowley—

Heigho, says Anthony Rowley !

We refrain from plunging further into the lyric, and tracing the tragic end of the frog, the cat, and the mouse; but it may be worth remarking that Rowley is ready with his Heigho at every stage of the history.

The frog is not unknown to poets in other quarters. Witness the frogs of Aristophanes; Homer's Epic of the Wars of the Frogs and Mice; the important dramatic part filled by the frog in Æsop's Fables; and Grimm's curious old legends, in which princes and nobles so often assume the outward form of the frog. In some ages and countries the frog has put on the form of superstition. He was sacred among the Egyptians, who credited him with a power of purifying the waters. We know that the toe of the frog was one of the ingredients of the witches' cauldron in Macbeth; though Shakespeare has not told us what particular efficacy it was supposed to possess. There was an old charm which consisted in cutting out the tongue of a live frog and laying it on the heart of a sleeping woman, and which compelled her to return a true answer to any question put to her; rather an awkward proof of Mr. Froggy's influence. If it be true that frogs can foretell the weather, or enable others to do so, a superstitious regard for them becomes rather respectable than otherwise. Mr. Pengelly, the naturalist, states that a few years ago he overtook a farm labourer near Torquay, when the following colloquy ensued:—

"It's a fine evening!"

"Yes, 'tis, but there'll be rain before morning!"

"Rain before morning! Why, there's not a cloud to be seen, and we've had no rain for some weeks. What makes you think there 'll be rain?"

"Well, the frogs make me think so. I've seen lots of 'em jumping across the road this evening—there goes another. I'm sure there 'll be rain before morning."

And rain there was.

Many of the beliefs and disbeliefs concerning the frog, the right notions and wrong notions relating to him, are dependent on his very remarkable personal history. The creature commences life as a tadpole, without limbs, but with a fish-like tail or paddle for progression through the water, and branchiæ for aquatic respiration. Some weeks afterwards, lungs begin to develop themselves, the branchiæ disappear in a withered state, the limbs peep forth, and the tail is completely but gradually absorbed; Master Tadpole becomes Master Frog, and is immensely delighted at being able to live like other landmen, instead of eternally paddling in the water. Nevertheless he still abides near marshes and ditches.

The great Lord Bacon sadly misconstrued some of the phenomena connected with frog life, probably from not duly estimating the remarkable preliminary stage of tadpole life. He mentions, as a peculiar and extraordinary circumstance that young frogs have sometimes been observed with tails; and that the years in which such phenomena occur have proved more than commonly pestilential and unhealthy. Hence, "the appearance of such tailed animals argueth a great disposition to putrefaction in the soile and aire." The great founder of the Inductive Philosophy was decidedly below par here. The so-called showers of frogs have in like manner led to much misconception. Often after a warm July shower, meadows and lanes show myriads of young frogs, leaping about in all directions; sometimes coming so suddenly and unexpectedly as to give rise to a belief that they have fallen from the clouds. The small size of such animals denotes that they have only recently emerged from the tadpole state. Under the theory of showers of frogs, some observers contend that the action of a violent wind is sufficient to elevate the spawn of frogs to a certain height in the air; that the germ of each animal there develops itself into a true frog; and that the whole family of frogs return to the ground again as rain. But there are some awkward difficulties connected with specific gravity, in relation to this. Professor Pontus, of Cahors, communicated to the French Academy, early in the pre-

sent century, the particulars of a shower of frogs which he observed near Toulouse. He saw several young frogs on the cloaks of two gentlemen who had been caught in a storm on the road. When the diligence in which he was travelling arrived at the place where the shower had burst forth, the road and fields were observed to be full of frogs, in some places three or four deep; the horses' hoofs killed thousands during the passage of the vehicle along the road. It was observed that the shower was preceded by the sudden appearance of a very thick cloud from the horizon, and the bursting out of a thunderstorm. The explanation of these phenomena, now accepted as most likely to be correct, is that myriads of young frogs, just emerged from the tadpole state, and taking their first walk on dry land, are whirled up by the vortex or whirlwind which so often occurs in sultry, thundery weather, and afterwards fall as a shower by their own weight.

The Heralds' College knows something about frogs; or ought so to do, for these batrachians figure in many an old emblazonment and armorial bearing. The early kings of France, long before the republican tricolor was thought of, had three frogs in a yellow field on their banners and coat armour; through some curious whim or freak, these frogs were afterwards changed to fleurs de lis, or lilies. The symbolic meaning seems to be lost; but in some old English churches there are stone effigies of mailed knights, supported by frogs—or rather, a frog supports the knight's sword. A golden frog hangs from the right ear of an armed figure in a monument at Boxsted church, Suffolk; the monument, of the time of Charles the First, is commemorative of Sir John Foley, Ireland, true to her belief that St. Patrick drove away all reptiles from that favoured island, asserts that frogs were banished as well as snakes. The land certainly brings forth frogs now, and in considerable number; but an unexpected explanation of this phenomenon is given:—"However fabulous it may appear, it is certain that frogs were formerly unknown in this country (Ireland). They were first propagated here from Spain, intended as an experiment, by a Fellow of Trinity College, Dublin, in 1696."

Naturalists have not left us entirely without anecdotes of froggy. Dr. Roots had a frog which domesticated itself in the kitchen. Every evening, when the

servants went to supper, he peeped out of his hole, as if to reconnoitre, jumped out if all seemed right, basked on the warm bright hearth, and there remained till the family went to bed. A friendship sprang up between froggy and an old cat, who shared the fireside with him, and was solicitous not to disturb or incommode his strange companion. A writer in the Zoologist states, that on one occasion, he saw several frogs gather round a window, crawl up the sun-blind, and peep into the room, each in his turn. At the time he did not understand what it meant; but on the following morning he found a frog which had accidentally been imprisoned between the window and the blind. The episode became clear enough; the frogs had anxiously clambered up to see a comrade who was in trouble, and were no doubt sorry at being unable to extricate him.

We bipeds in the human form have a proneness to devour many animals which we admire when living, such as lambs, deer, chickens, and pigeons; while some of us show the same kind of gastronomic liking for beings which certainly are not much admired in the living form. Take frogs, for instance. That they are an article of food is unquestionable, though not to a great extent. The French declare that, when properly cooked, frogs are very nice eating; and certainly cooking has been raised more nearly to the rank of a fine art in France than in any other country. Some time ago a statement appeared in the newspapers to the effect that, within the short space of three weeks, one merchant sent two hundred thousand frogs from Belgium to France, chiefly to Paris, Nancy, and Rheims. The price was about thirteen francs or half-a-guinea per thousand. Much patience must have been shown by the cooks; for we are told that the thighs of the frogs were roasted, and eaten with white sauce, or in fricassees; the skin and most other parts were utilised as components in mock-turtle soup. It appears to be in the spring and autumn that this supply for France is obtained. In the market-place of Milan, some few years ago, an English sojourner saw a woman preparing frogs for cooking. She had a sackful near at hand: she took them one by one, placed them on her knee, skinned them expertly, and threw them into a dish, where the wretched little beings crawled one over another skinless. Mr. Fortune describes a scene



almost exactly similar to this, as coming under his notice at Ningpo, in China. A traveller, passing near St. Helen's, Lancashire, saw some boys splashing about in a pond, catching frogs, and cutting off their hind legs. He asked them what they did with the frogs? The answer assumed this puzzling form—"We putters um oth frying-pon, an' then ith 'oon; an' they're graidly good." The meaning of which we may surmise after a little study. Most likely the hind legs were the parts thus treated.

Besides being regarded as a somewhat exceptional article of food, the frog is credited by many persons with medicinal virtues. A woman, when reaping in one of the rural districts, was seen to swallow some frogs; she held each by its legs, put it into her mouth, and gulped it down. When questioned, she stated that it was intended as a cure for a stomach complaint. Highland gleaners have been seen to do the very same thing. Schoolboys were much addicted to this practice, and from the same motive, early in the present century. In the North Riding of Yorkshire the frog-regimen is occasionally adopted for weakness and consumption. In Lincolnshire, when infants have a mouth complaint arising from, or somewhat resembling, thrush, some of the country people will take a live frog by the hind leg, and allow it to sprawl about the mouth of the child, under the supposition that a curative influence would be exercised. In some parts of Wiltshire, live frogs are given to cows when they cease to chew the cud.

One of the most remarkable, and perhaps the least explicable, facts connected with this family of reptiles, is the alleged inclosure of frogs and toads in solid rock and in the heart of trees, where they are supposed to have existed for unknown centuries, deprived of all access to food or air, and yet alive when extricated. The stories relating to this subject are many and marvellous; men of science do not think it safe to believe them, but at the same time they are convinced that there is some truth in the matter, however difficult it may be to get at. Smellie, in his *Philosophy of Natural History*, refers to an account in the *Memoirs of the Academy of Sciences*, of a toad found alive and healthy in the heart of an old elm; and of another discovered near Nantes in the heart of an old oak, without any visible entrance to its habitation. In this second instance,

judging from the number of rings in the wood, and the depth of the imbedding, it was inferred that the animal must have been imprisoned there at least eighty or a hundred years. Mr. Jesse, the naturalist, found a frog in a mulberry tree; the annular layers of wood were gradually but surely enclosing him.

The imprisonment of frogs and toads in stone is, however, much more remarkable than that in the trunks of trees, even if we believe only a modicum of the narratives published on the subject. The statements are unmistakeable, and are made in all good faith, that living frogs and toads are occasionally met with thus imbedded, and that exact impressions of their bodies, corresponding to their respective sizes, are left in the cavities of the stone where they are found. Chatsworth is credited with having once had (we do not know whether it still exists) a marble chimney-piece with a print of a toad in it; there was a traditionary account of the place and manner in which it was found. The *Mining Journal* contains an account of a discovery made by a miner at Penny-darran, near Merthyr Tydvil. When working at a depth of forty-five feet, his mandrel struck into a piece of shale; a frog, large but weak, leaped out and crawled along the ground with some difficulty; the eyes were full-sized, but apparently sightless; the mouth seemed as if permanently closed, and the spine was twisted as if it had been compelled to adapt itself to a narrow and ill-shaped space. The frog, when liberated, grew in size and weight, but could not be fed; he appeared to breathe through the skin covering the lower jaw. We certainly cannot blame Ellis, the miner, for exhibiting his prodigy to admiring visitors at a public-house in Merthyr; and considering the intensity of popular belief on this subject, we must view indulgently his inscription: "The greatest wonder of the world! a frog found in a stone forty feet below the surface of the earth, where it has been living without food for the last five thousand years!"

The first question is, how much of these narratives to believe? and the second, how to account for so much as we do believe? That frogs live to a great age; that they are able to endure long abstinence; that their power of hybernation is something extraordinary; and that the skin has the property of acting upon the atmosphere in such a way as to fulfil, in



some degree, the function of the lungs—are facts admitted by naturalists. The toad, also, when kept in a damp place, can live several months without food of any kind. Smellie, while cautiously abstaining alike from positive belief and absolute incredulity, recommended observant men to attend to such a possible explanation as the following. "In the rocks there are many chinks as well as fissures, both horizontal and perpendicular; and in old trees, nothing is more frequent than holes and vacuities, of various dimensions. Through these fissures and vacuities the eggs of toads may accidentally be conveyed by water, the penetration of which few substances are capable of resisting; after the eggs are hatched, the animals may receive moisture and small portions of air through the crevices of rocks or the channels of aged trees. But," he modestly adds, "I mean not to persuade, for I cannot satisfy myself." Mr. Broderip, the naturalist, does not admit the probability of Smellie's conjecture concerning the conveyance of the frogs' eggs by water. No one now doubts that frogs, toads, snakes, and lizards really do issue occasionally from rock broken in a quarry, hard stone loosened in well-sinking, and coal or shale dug in a colliery; but the question is, whether the substances were really solid and impassable to air and moisture. The late Dr. Buckland remarked that, "The evidence is never perfect to show that the reptiles were entirely enclosed in solid rock. No examination is ever made until the reptile is first discovered by the breaking of the mass in which it was contained; and then it is too late to ascertain, without carefully replacing every fragment (and in no case that I have seen reported has this ever been done) whether or not there was any hole or crevice by which the animal may have entered the cavity from which it was extracted. Without previous examination, it is almost impossible to prove that there was no such communication."

Dr. Buckland, to test the matter in some degree, made some remarkable experiments. He caused twelve circular cells or cavities to be cut in a large block of coarse oolitic limestone, with provision for an air-tight glass cover to each cell. Twelve other cells were cut in a block of silicious sandstone. Twenty-four live toads were put into the cells, one in each, the covers fastened down air-tight, and the blocks of stone buried three feet deep

in a garden. They were left undisturbed for twelve months, at the end of which time the cells were opened. All the toads in the sandstone rock were dead; but most of those in the oolite (the cells of which were larger) were still living; some had lessened in weight, some had increased; but as a few of the plates of glass were found cracked, it was deemed possible that minute insects might have entered. The living toads were left alone for another twelve months, at the end of which time all were dead. Seen through the glass covers, the poor fellows seemed to be always awake, with open eyes. Perhaps they were marvelling what crime of theirs had subjected them to a sentence of two years' solitary confinement. A smaller experiment accompanied this principal one. Dr. Buckland placed four toads in three cells or holes cut for the purpose in the trunk of an apple tree; two were companions in the largest cell, the other two occupied a small cell each; but though small, these cells were tolerably roomy for middle size toads, being about five inches deep by three inches diameter. The cavities were carefully and closely plugged with wood. All four toads were found dead and decayed at the end of the first year. In another subsidiary experiment, four small basins of plaster of Paris were scooped out, a live toad placed in each, and a cover luted down air-tight on the top. The whole were buried underground; twelve months afterwards two of the toads were dead, the other two living, but greatly emaciated.

To sum up; the best naturalists now agree that, however wonderful the ascertained phenomena really are, frogs and toads cannot live one year wholly without air, nor probably two years wholly without food.

#### IN THE SPRING.

It is spring, laughs the blue hepatica, as it gems the garden bed;  
It is spring, breathes the modest primrose, as it rears its virgin head;  
It is spring, says the pure anemone, amid the vivid grass,  
That waves beneath the merry winds, and glitters as we pass.

The wild birds hail the spring-time, as they mate, and sing, and build,  
The whole great sweep of earth and sky, with spring's gay smile is thrilled,  
Young lambs in sunlit pastures, young chickens in the croft,  
Renew the lovely miracle that Nature sees so oft.

And something in my heart revives, that silent, sad,  
and strong,  
Fades all the early blooms for me, and jars the  
thrushes' song,  
The life that throbs in April's heart wakes every  
mortal thing,  
And grief, with birds, and buds, and flowers, stirs  
freshly in the spring.

#### MORE OF JEMMY BIBB.\*

It was at a ball that I first became acquainted with the handsome, but somewhat portly, Miss Turtle. I had noticed a group whose elements never seemed to change their position during the night: a father, a mother, and a daughter, a relation about as plain and conspicuous as though each carried a written placard on their breasts. The young lady, as the dancers flew by, and more aggravating still, as some chosen candidate for a valse pushed past her, to take a place in the dance, followed with eyes that likewise danced; and I could see with what a wistful gaze she pursued the panting and exhausted performer, whom the simpering partner brought back and restored to the matron in charge. The secret of this prescription I was not long in discovering; it was clear that she was suffering for the sins of those to whom she owed her being.

The Turtle père—the Turtle father—was a tall, lean, rather scorbutic being, in a flowered white satin vest, and a tight neckcloth, tied in a meagre skimpy bow, into which uncomfortable bandage he seemed to settle his neck with satisfaction. He kept himself upright, surveying the room with a disdainful arrogance. Beside him stood his lady, Mrs. Turtle, of enormous stoutness, and sumptuously attired. The daughter, it might be fairly speculated, would by-and-by take after her mother, as the phrase runs, and develop into a similar expanse of blooming charms. A little enquiry put me in possession of their biography. Mr. Turtle was a monied man, who had raised himself, was "self-made," "risen from the ranks," according to the favourite metaphor used in speaking of such people. There were not wanting, of course, a few persons without money who "remembered the time when the Turtles were in a very poor way indeed," and when, as had been gathered from a servant who had once lived in their family, they had not a silver fork to put on their table. However this might be, I was

certain that Mr. Turtle was a millionaire, in the rather elastic sense of the term, being worth about a couple of hundred thousand pounds, and was looking for a baronetcy; while Mrs. Turtle ordered dresses from the famous Regent Street milliner, was eager to get into society, and to bring her daughter "out," though the present attempt at the last-named operation could hardly be pronounced encouraging. On pressing for the reason of this extraordinary failure—for the family party seemed, in reference to those about them, like those soapstone idols we see in the curiosity shops—it was explained that the isolation was owing to the arrogant bearing of Mr. Turtle, who looked down on the chief portion of his fellow-creatures, and was only eager to associate with lords and baronets. This intercourse he could only contrive to secure by unwearied labour and expense—by perpetual hospitality, presents, and outlay of some kind or other—the lords and baronets being only securable on such costly terms. There was "an utter absence of reciprocity," as Mrs. Turtle, with some bitterness, discovered; and the instant that their laborious assiduities were suspended—such as the asking to dinners, to visit, the offering of presents, &c.—the acquaintance seemed at once to languish, and, after a short interval, to become extinct altogether. The cultivation of society under such conditions involved a lack of spontaneousness, and became analogous to pursuing a hard-working profession. The Turtles could generally contrive, however (with incredible exertion be it said) to secure some second or third son to come on a visit, and with the aid of such a guest something could be made up to convey the idea of a fashionable party staying in the house.

Still, though unsuccessful at this ball, I could see that Mr. Turtle took a pride in his desertion, surveying the crowd who did not come near him with a sort of stiff arrogance. It was very different, however, with the ardent Louisa Turtle—such, I learned, was her name—who was literally languishing for what might be called "employment." Waltz, galop, lancers succeeded; the whirling couples brushed by. She must have suffered the torments of a terpsichorean Tantalus. I really felt a sort of pity for her, to say nothing of the reflection that in these utilitarian days an heiress should be so scurvily treated.

\* See ALL THE YEAR ROUND, No. 281, page 5.

During the course of the ball, I met an acquaintance, the Honourable Mr. Crabtree—a fair, rather rapid young gentleman, with a glass in his eye. He began with a complaint. He had been “fighting shy” of those Turtles, though they had already “nailed him” for a dinner. He was obliged to go, as his uncle, Lord Bullman, had been dragged down there, “by the leg,” he added; though why so rude and peculiar a mode of seizure had been adopted was not clear. I asked him why he did not pay some fitting attention to the daughter of his future host, who was regarding him with a sort of wistful entreaty. “O Lord!” he said, “not I; life is too short for dancing. But come along, and I’ll introduce you.” He led me up. The older Turtle smiled graciously on me, as being introduced by so becoming a sponsor as the Honourable Crabtree. He spoke in grating tones, but with condescension. “Would you do me the pleasure of dining with me to-morrow,” he said. “A few friends—only Lord Bullman, our mutual friend Crabtree, and a few more. His lordship very seldom comes into this part of the country, and we must try and entertain him as best we can. By the way,” and he looked wistfully across the room, “who is that with Mr. Crabtree? He was with you too.”

It was Bibb, the joker, who was at that moment convulsing a small party, illustrating whatever story he was telling with facial contortions. Good gracious! he had at that instant contrived to make his features assume the rigid stiffness of the gentleman with whom I was conversing! I turned with some alarm to my companion, but he was quite unconscious of the likeness. Bibb was the most daring of mimics, or perhaps knew well what a reserve of complacent vanity stood between him and detection. “He seems a very clever, entertaining person,” continued Mr. Turtle, watching him.

“He is,” I said. “He makes us all die with laughing after dinner.”

“He is a friend of yours?” he asked.

“A particular one,” I said.

“Then I must ask you to introduce me,” he said, as if giving a command.

I felt that there was something piquant in this notion of the ridicule thus desiring the acquaintance of his ridiculer; so I at once complied, and, interrupting Mr. Bibb as he was about to give a fresh exhibition of my companion, brought him over.

“Proud to know you, sir,” said the other, loftily; “I hear you are so clever and amusing. Would you come and dine with me to-morrow, at eight o’clock, to meet Lord Bullman? I want particularly to entertain him.”

Bibb looked at him from head to foot with some insolence. But his face cleared in a moment. “Then why do you ask me?” he said, “I couldn’t entertain any one of that kind, a real lord, you know.”

“Oh you will do very well,” said Mr. Turtle condescendingly, “just tell him stories, make him laugh. I assure you he is not at all stand-off.”

“Oh, if you guarantee that,” said Bibb gravely, “it would make me more easy in my mind.”

“I assure you, you will be quite at your ease with him. Well, that’s settled—we shall expect you at eight o’clock.”

“Low snob!” said Bibb to me, as we turned away. “I would have declined at once, only I wanted to punish him and take his conceit out of him. We will entertain Lord Bullman for him, but it may be in a very different style from what he supposes.”

For the rest of the night, almost literally for the rest of the night, I danced with Miss Turtle. She was what is called a good girl, and without any of her parents’ arrogance. They tolerated my attentions, I could see, on account of my friendship with the Honourable Mr. Crabtree, in whom they evinced a tender interest. Mrs. Turtle, it is true, was indignant at first, and on several occasions seemed on the verge of rebuking my presumption. But I contrived to mollify her, mainly by using my friend Crabtree. He kept us going, so to speak. With Louisa, I am bound to say, I stood on my own merits, and ‘shawled her’ with due devotion on her departure. In her case this was purely a conventional phrase, but in her mamma’s instance it was anything but a fiction, what shawled and what was shawled being of the most substantial kind. To the last moment Mr. Turtle spoke of “my carriage,” and “my horses,” “my coachman,” and the very last sounds audible from the carriage window was “Lord Bullman.”

Bibb, I, and the Hon. Mr. Crabtree drove out together to Turtle Towers. It was a new place, suggesting one of those showy new shops in the city, for it was all plate-glass and flaming brick-work. The hall was brilliant with tiles, the servants

looked like the attendants at music halls, and were quite as gaudy. We were introduced to long rooms, full of vast gilt furniture, furlongs of mirrors, and strewn with acres of glaring carpets. At the end of this vista stood upon the rug, the stiff pink-faced host, with a short little gentleman whom we knew to be Lord Bullman. About twenty people were assembled in honour of this distinguished Joss, to whom our host appeared to act as chief priest. There was a general air of state and pride over the family, though I must own that I was greeted by the young lady with a good-natured eagerness and heartiness, which showed that she recalled with pleasure our agreeable evening of the night before. By Mr. Turtle I was received in a business-like fashion, still not on my own merits, but as the friend of the Hon. Crabtree and introducer of Bibb. On that humourist I could see rested the chief interest. Lord Bullman surveyed him with a curious expectancy, as though to be sure that he had brought his carpet, cups, and balls, and other apparatus, having evidently been informed by his host of the great treat in store. We reckoned on our friend's breaking out on the rug at the very moment of his entrance, such was the exuberant humour of the man. But to our surprise, he was grave, and remarked seriously that "he thought the crops would be seriously retarded by the spell of moist weather we had lately." This speculation was received rather gloomily, though the lord did not take his eye off him, as though there was some joke lurking in ambuscade.

We defiled down to dinner and took our places in the splendid dining-room, the walls of which were all scarlet and gold, while the eye settled on a long array of family pictures, of all ages and eras, representing the various Turtles of various generations. There were soldiers, navy captains, clergymen, one or two in armour, and one or two in wigs and powder. Mr. Turtle, I saw, belonged to one of those old-established trading houses who have a pedigree of their own, and it certainly showed an independence of character for which I had not given him credit, that he should have been willing to exhibit over his board the honest progenitors who had enabled him to spread it so handsomely. We were arranging ourselves—the bulk of the party being men—when Mr. Turtle called out,

"Mr. Bibb, please to come up here, near his lordship." To my surprise, Bibb

obeyed this command with great humility, and seated himself next the nobleman whom he was to entertain. Poor Bibb! such are the humiliations the professional jester exposes himself to. I was just opposite, so I could observe everything conveniently. Near us was seated a sickly-looking person, with what seemed some stubble plucked from an old hair trunk stuck on his lips and chin, in the shape of a moustache and imperial. This gentleman we discovered to be Algernon Perkins, who affected to be strong in art, and spoke of all the leading painters of the day familiarly, not to say flippantly. He knew all about what may be called secret pictures, that is, pictures which no one had ever heard of; while those which were commonly known he dismissed as "pot boilers." He would have commanded no attention from our host, as such themes were plebeian in their nature; but he contrived to associate his artistic notes with persons of high degree, and of sounding titles, who were introduced as interlocutors, or condescending patrons. Perkins, I could see, had, besides, established his position by a kind of despotism, keeping his host in a sustained awe and just terror of him. His utterances, however, were in a dry, thin key, and caused no little amusement from their self-sufficiency. Bibb, on other occasions, would have found infinite entertainment in drawing him out, and perhaps have given a portrait of him to his face. But Bibb's behaviour was on the whole extraordinary, and for a time inexplicable.

He spoke very little, but every remark he made was of the most vivid and conventional kind, such as, "What a rainy day last Wednesday was!" "I am told this will be a great year for turnips;" "I see by the morning papers the Queen will go to Balmoral this year;" and the like. The lord looked at him, first with surprise, then almost with contempt, and finally seemed to decline to carry on conversation with him at all. This was after Bibb had innocently asked the question, "If Punch was still published?" adding that he recollected when there used to be some very funny things in it. "I remember one capital hit," he added, "about Lord John, as a little boy, running away after chalking up, 'No popery.'" The lord in disgust changed the conversation. He was bored.

But how shall I describe the indignation of our host, Mr. Turtle? His party was



being spoiled, his great guest alienated. He snorted contempt and arrogance at Bibb. "I was given to understand that you were a wit, sir. You seem, on the contrary—hum—that is, rather, scarcely—I can't understand it—"

"Well, I thought I was rather in the vein to-night," said Bibb, with a disappointed air. "By the way, I'll tell you a good riddle, I read in a book the other day, I am sorry I didn't get it by heart, only it was so long. It began—

'Twas whispered in Hell and muttered in Heaven—

No, I don't think it goes exactly that way—I'll recollect it presently."

"You must take us for children, sir," said the lord. "The thing you mention is as old as the hills."

"Indeed!" said Bibb. "Well I never saw it before."

"Quite ridiculous," said Mr. Turtle, "as his lordship says;" and with his chin in the air, his face began to glow, and he turned from side to side in a perfect "fume." I believe he considered that he had been, in a manner, "taken in," or robbed of his state dinner, and if such a proceeding could be at all tolerated by the rules of society, he would have had in the servants for the purpose of removing him. Nothing, however, disturbed the good humour of Bibb, and nothing appeared to moderate the arrogance of Mr. Turtle.

He kept offering profuse apologies to his lordship. "What I expect, my lord, when I ask company to my table, is that every one shall contribute to the entertainment. If I give money for a picture, I expect a picture in return. You know that, well, Perkins."

"You mistake, surely," said Mr. Perkins, coldly; "you don't mean that any of your money has passed through my hands?"

"Dear, dear, no. I mean that you know the sums that I have paid to artists, and men of that kind."

"Oh, of course," said the other carelessly. "You can't get good pictures without paying for them."

"Ah, of course not," said Mr. Turtle, with deference. "But really this sort of thing is so improper. When I have guests at my table, I expect them to exert themselves. You can tell stories—eh?"

Bibb shook his head.

"Or make jokes or something?"

Bibb again shook his head.

"Intolerable," muttered Mr. Turtle.

"I don't understand it. It's spoiling my party," and in this strain our host proceeded for some three or four courses, growing more and more pointed in his remarks to poor Bibb, until even his lordship began to look uncomfortable. But he little knew Bibb. The story of his vengeance for this treatment is the subject of the present narrative.

I was seated beside the lovely Louisa. I had ascertained all about her; she would be an heiress of the true eighteen carat quality. She was to have her mother's fortune. Of course the importance of this expression all depends upon what value is attached to the words "her mother's fortune." But there was an old gentleman there—a crafty, crawling, and obsequious dependent of the house, who spoke of the daughter as "Louisa," and gave me all particulars. Nothing could be more satisfactory than his revelations. The mother's fortune, a saintly woman I am certain, reached to forty thousand pounds, a sum, as the crawler energetically explained, "no human power could keep from her." On this hint I spake, and all through the dinner, narrowed and yet narrowed again, the line of circumvallation, until there was every promise of the citadel surrendering before the night was over. The engaging creature, who I could see was pining under an arrogant despotism, opened her heart to me; and I think I may say that everything was going on in the most gratifying way. As soon as the drawing-room was reached, I made up my mind that I would send forward a parlementaire, to settle the conditions of surrender.

The only thing that distracted my operations was the incomprehensible behaviour of Bibb. Was he awed, or even cowed by the society, or the sense of responsibility; so much being expected from him? But again this was not like Bibb; for under such conditions this would be but a fresh spring of action. In truth I was a little ashamed of him; and not a little alarmed on my own account, as being in a manner his sponsor—having latterly noticed the arrogant eye of the host resting on me in a hostile manner, as who should say, "I hold you accountable for this failure." But I little knew Bibb. He was biding his time. The hour for exposure and vengeance was at hand.

The ladies were retiring, and we all rose and stood at attention. Has it been

noticed how every one on such an occasion turns, with extraordinary interest, to the pictures on the walls, and begins to admire? The lord at once fell into this routine.

"All your ancestors about you?" he said. "Why, we have hardly so many at Bullock."

"Yes, my lord," we heard Mr. Turtle say, "they are very interesting. They were all lying by in garrets, and when I built my house I had them taken out and cleaned. Won't you sit near the fire and try this mootong claret?"

But his lordship was too much interested in the pictures, and, having taken a candle was walking round the room examining them deliberately. Mr. Turtle had to follow him, and Perkins, as artistic assessor, had to attend. The frames stood out massively and solidly, like gilt walls, and had shields affixed in which various legends were inscribed.

There was a General Turtle, 1760, in a very high-waisted and badly-fitting red coat, and a helmet like a sea shell, who seemed to be calling a cab through a cloud of dust. Under him was emblazoned the words—

MAJOR-GENERAL EDWARD TURTLE,  
BORN 1710—DIED 1760.

HE COMMANDED THE RIGHT WING AT THE  
BATTLE OF WEIMAR,  
WHERE HE WAS WOUNDED.

"Very interesting," said his lordship, "really very interesting."

"A fine piece," added the assessor, "Van Cuyper's second manner."

"I paid a frightful sum," said Mr. Turtle, rather proud of these encomiums of his military ancestor, "to McScrubber in the Haymarket for cleaning and restoring. But the picture is well worth it."

They passed on to a clergyman, with a wig like Doctor Syntax; and a large volume open before him. Underneath the following legend:—

THE REV. WILLIAM TURTLE, D.D.,  
VICAR OF CRAMPLEY-IN-THE-DRAINS;  
AUTHOR OF THE WHOLE COMMENTARY ON THE  
PARABLES.

They came next to what the assessor styled "a lovely Gainsborough," painted in his streaky sea-green manner, and a graceful ancestress leaning on her curved wrist, and entitled "Dorothea Turtle," married to St. John Collier, Esq.

All this time our friend Bibb was at the bottom of the table, conversing earnestly with Mr. Crabtree, and pouring out Mr. Turtle's mootong with great diligence. The travelling party was now beside him, and Mr. Turtle snorted his indignation once more.

"There are people I may ask once, but whom I take very good care never to ask again. Such work as it is."

Suddenly all Jemmy Bibb's animation returned, and he jumped up; but I could see there was mischief in his eye. The hour for vengeance had struck.

"What, looking at pictures?" he said. "Oh, there I am strong. Why good gracious me! How did this come here? What does this mean?"

He had snatched the candle from the lord's hand, and was gazing with an air of stupefied astonishment at the picture of the beautiful Dorothea, the Gainsborough, in his streaky manner.

"Oh, folly! absurd, sir!" said Mr. Turtle, reddening, for he may have had a suspicion of what was coming.

"Absurd! not a bit of it! It's quite rational. But I want to know how it came here? Where did you get it? Tell me, was it at Christie's? I know my poor father would have given his eyes to have got them all back—"

"Them," said his lordship, with a malicious curiosity. "Do you mean the pictures?"

"Why here's the parson, my grand-uncle! and, I declare, the old general, too—old cockalorum we used to call him when we were children. Oh, that all accounts for it. If you knew the trouble we have been at to trace them. But we lost sight of them altogether. I really think it broke poor father's heart."

A wonderful change had come over Bibb. No one could say now that he was silent or stupid. The words flowed from him: he was energetic—excited, as though labouring under a sense of wrong. We had all crowded round him, to hear this mysterious business explained, not a little prompted, perhaps, by the notion of the disturbed, and even contorted face of the arrogant host. The latter, like some guilty felon detected, vainly murmured the somewhat contradictory invitation—

"Let us join the ladies. Won't you have some more claret?"

No one heeded him; we were all so curious.

"Dear, dear! what a surprise this is!"

continued Bibb. "If you only knew the anxiety and the life-long hunt we have had about these family portraits——"

"I really don't understand, sir," blustered the host. "What do you mean by claiming things in my house, my property?"

"No doubt, no doubt," said Bibb, with a gracious allowance. "I assure you I make no complaint against you. These dealers, of course, brought you a lot of these pictures, and you took them. How could you know that they belonged to a private family——"

"This is insufferable," said the host, furiously. "I tell you, sir, that all these pictures on these walls are——"

"Ancestors of the Turtle family?" and Jemmy Bibb paused. "No; you won't, you can't say that. What," added Bibb, looking at the legends, "Dorothea Turtle; General Turtle. Oh, I say, this is going too far."

There was conviction in every face, as Mr. Turtle saw. The purchase of ancestors was a known device in the arts of parvenus. He was silent in presence of this awful detection.

"But, pray let us know," said Lord Bullman, "how the case really stands. I have been taken round and invited to admire these portraits, as portraits of various members of the family of Mr. Turtle. I now ask, as there seems to be a question about the matter, are they so or not?"

A dreadful pause ensued. I could see the crimson muscles in Mr. Turtle's face working spasmodically. Jemmy Bibb saw them too. He was a good fellow, after all, and thought he had dealt out sufficient punishment. Suddenly, he burst into a loud laugh, and, before Mr. Turtle could speak, said, boisterously,

"There's not one of them a Bibb. It's all a joke. They are all Turtle ancestors, of course; you see the name is written underneath. I never heard or saw one of them before."

The look that Mr. Turtle gave him was a curious one—compounded of dislike, anger, and, at the same time, of intense relief.

He was saved.

"Oh, indeed!" said Lord Bullman. "This gentleman was so positive and circumstantial, I really thought that the ancestors descended from no higher source than Wardour-street."

"No," said Jemmy Bibb; "I know

nothing about them. Mr. Turtle wanted me to make a joke, and I made one; a good one too, I think."

Mr. Turtle was quite cowed, and made no reply. His lordship then said, "We had better join the ladies;" and we did so.

The story circulated through the district, and it was considered that Mr. Turtle's arrogance was effectively taken down. I, however, was the real victim; for I lost all chance of Louisa Turtle.

## SAFELY MARRIED.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "AN EXPERIENCE," "DAISY'S TRIALS," &c., &c.

### BOOK III. CHAPTER XII.

THAT this is a sick world, a sick, a sad and a sorry world, I began about this time to think, for no better reason, as I am ashamed to remember, than that my own health was out of order. Some sort of threat of inexplicable physical ill seemed to be hanging over me. My "spirits," which, all my life long till now, had been good, now failed me. I was under a constant, and, as far as I knew, causeless depression. I was a-weary of a world which had come to mean for me painful, oppressed days and vaguely anxious sleepless nights. I often thank God for that experience, it taught me more than one lesson; since that time I have been, I think, more tolerant and sympathetic towards others.

Allan and Elsie were very good to me. For some time—I don't seem to have any means of knowing whether for weeks or for months, though I think it can only have been for weeks—I had no reason to doubt but that things were going fairly well with them. Christmas had been a happy time to Allan. The day itself he and Elsie had spent at my cottage, as I was not well enough to go to Braithwait, and Allan had told me how charmingly Elsie had borne herself at the Christmas-Eve festival they had given to the villagers, how gracious she had been with the old people, how kindly with the children, how she had won all hearts. In the sunshine of her husband's approval Elsie seemed to be, for a brief while, more than her better self, better than herself!

It can only—I see when I come to recollect—have been for a few weeks after this that things seemed to be going fairly well; even then only so far fairly well as that Allan had not relapsed into that settled blackness of gloom which had been upon

him in the late autumn. I did not think that he looked, on the whole, in better physical health, and he always seemed to be keeping a half furtive strain of watch upon Elfie. During these comparatively fair-seeming weeks I, no doubt, saw the best of them, for they were both anxious about me, and desirous not to worry me, reproaching themselves with having done that too much already.

However, it was not long before I discovered in what new way—it seemed as if she must be always finding some new way—Elfie was harassing her husband. She had upon her a hunting mania; she was making herself notorious for her reckless riding, conspicuous by the costume in which she chose to ride, and—there was something worse in the back-ground, which did not at once come to my knowledge. Often enough I had heard Allan say, how out of place and out of taste he considered a young and refined woman's appearance in the hunting-field. I could imagine, therefore, something of the excessive and complicated annoyance Elfie was now causing him. She chose to ride in a costume imitated from one with the description of which, in a French novel, she had fallen in love. It was not in itself in bad taste, or it would not have been adopted by Elfie, not in itself in bad taste, and it was marvellously becoming. The bad taste, of course, consisted in the fact that it made her, and seemed meant to make her, the cynosure of all eyes. For the rest, the velvet hat, with its long plume fastened in by a jewelled buckle, the short ermine-bordered velvet tunic over a long, flowing skirt, had nothing objectionable about them, except, indeed, that they were costly for the rough wear she gave them.

When I one day said a few words to Elfie, intimating that it was not pleasant to Allan that she should make herself so much talked about, she answered quite meditatively,

"How strange that is! Not like to have his wife talked about! What harm can it do him to have his wife talked about, provided that no harm is said of her?"

"But, Elfie, this is such an evil-speaking malicious world, that it seldom talks much or long of a woman, without saying a good deal of harm of her."

"I am not going to trouble myself about so stupid and so unpleasant a world then," was all her reply.

Next time they came to see me, while Elfie was upstairs, taking off her wraps and the thing she called her bonnet, for they were going to stay the evening, Allan said,

"Don't speak any more to Elfie, if you please, Aunt Hammond, either about her hunting or the dress she chooses to hunt in. She thinks I set you on to do it."

"Why should she think you would not speak yourself? And why, if you so disapprove of these things, do you not forbid them, once for all forbid them, Allan Braithwait."

"For reasons that seem to me sufficient. I have come to see that Elfie must have some kind of excitement; this is wholesome physical excitement, by which, too, strangely enough, her health seems to profit. I don't want her to feel that I am always playing the schoolmaster and interfering with her pet pleasures, that I disapprove of everything she chiefly cares for. Don't you think I am right, Aunt Hammond, in yielding to Elfie when I feel it possible to yield? There are often things, quite lately there has been a thing, about which it is impossible I should yield."

I gave him some evasive sort of answer. My old maid's heart approves of the high-handed uncompromising style of marital government—at all events theoretically.

But towards Elfie I could not recommend the adoption of this style absolute, because I did not believe it could succeed; she was too elusive and subtle, there was too much quicksilver in her veins and elvish fire in her blood. Just as I had often refrained from commanding her, as a child, to do or not to do a thing, because I knew I had no means of ensuring her obedience, I now refrained from counselling Allan to lay his commands upon his wife.

"Again and again she has made my blood curdle," Allan went on, "by the daring things she does. She ignores the possibility of danger, and, while under excitement, seems incapable of feeling fatigue. She is so light, so small, so elastic, she sits her horse so perfectly, and there seems so complete an understanding between them, that no doubt danger is reduced to its minimum. Nevertheless she troubles my days with fear and my nights with dreams. I ride out with visions before my eyes of how she will be brought home; horrible visions, horrible, and with a complicated sort of horror, perfectly inexplicable. I have a



haunting presentiment that this is how it is all to end."

"How all what is to end?"

He was standing with his foot on my fender, looking into my fire; at my question he turned, regarding me with surprise.

"How all what is to end? Surely you can't but know what I mean—this life of torture."

I have never forgotten the expression of his eyes as he said the last words; but I can't describe it, only the torture of which he spoke seemed to look out of them.

I had been sufficiently deceived by the improved surface of things, to feel a considerable shock from those words and that look of his. In my confusion, I suppose, I forgot that it was a man, and a young man, to whom I talked, and that I was not, though I might have been, his grandmother. For I bluntly spoke out the secret thought of my heart, saying,

"If only Elsie had a baby!"

The grave astonishment with which Mr. Braithwait looked at me made matters worse, by causing me to blush furiously, like the ridiculous old person I was; I added, in apologetic explanatoriness,

"It would occupy her, and amuse her, and keep her out of mischief, you see."

"Do you think Elsie so fit for the most sacred and serious responsibilities of life, that you should wish her to be a mother?" I quailed before the solemn gravity of the stern young man, and he added, "I thank Heaven daily that we have no child."

"But," I said, trying to pluck up courage, and to speak self-defensively, "it might change her. I have heard of motherhood working like a miracle in girls as frivolous as Elsie."

"I don't know that Elsie is frivolous. I sometimes doubt it. More and more I feel that I know nothing whatever about her."

Partly to change the subject, I then began to speak to him of Angela, to tell him of what news, of herself and her surroundings, had been contained in her last letter. I always kept up a correspondence with Angela, and I had formerly looked forward to having her to live with me, as soon as Elsie should be "safely married," but for the present, I had a strong persuasion that she was better further off.

"Poor Angela!" said Allan, "I wish she would leave the Esherbees. I don't believe she is happy there, she did not

seem so to me when I saw her there last autumn. Mrs. Esherbee is a hard and haughty woman, and seems jealous of the children's affection for their governess. Poor Angela! I always used to please myself by thinking, that when I married, my house might be Angela's home, till she married. Sometimes, now, I wonder if Elsie might not get good from her companionship."

"Far too dangerous an experiment. Don't dream of trying it. Why I myself refrain from having the comfort and the happiness of Angela's presence with me, because I don't think it would be for the true good of any of us that Angela should be so near Braithwait—should see so much of you!"

I had spoken rather excitedly, and when he looked at me with those solemn eyes of his, in grave enquiry, thinking I had said too much, I hastened to make matters worse, saying, by way of explanation, "Don't misunderstand me—don't think I mean more than I do—you must know with what warm gratitude Angela feels towards you, how natural it is that she should make a hero of you, think all you do, wise, and right, and grand. Now, seeing that, as yet, you are not quite happy in your marriage, it would not be prudent, it might be dangerous, that you should be receiving constantly the homage of such a woman as——"

"No need to say more," Allan interrupted me. "Poor Angela! God bless her! Dear Angela." He added, softly, to himself, and there had come a curiously tender glow into the gloom of his eyes, which I often afterwards remembered—a curiously tender glow into the gloom of his eyes, while a tender light, a something of yearning, spread over his face.

At this moment, the room-door opened to admit Elsie.

"Mistress Braithwait, what a toilet!" I exclaimed, holding up my hands in wonder and admiration, as the radiant creature came in.

Allan's smile was dazzled and indulgent as he said, putting his arm round her as he spoke, and this was the first and the only hint I heard from him, that he found her expenditure extravagant,

"Considering how tiny she is, Aunt Hammond, it does sometimes surprise me that it takes so much gold to cover her."

"Allan says this colour suits me, and I thought you should have something bright

to look at this dreary afternoon," said Elfie.

"Yes, I think that colour suits her better, perhaps, than any other except, perhaps, blue, or lilac, or, now I remember, green, cherry-colour, amber—but best of all, white I think becomes her."

Elfie looked at her husband with slightly lifted baby-brows—the colour she was wearing was deep peach-blossom pink, much trimmed with swansdown: she had never assumed a crinoline, and always liked to have her dresses sweeping about her feet, which, nevertheless, she found opportunity to allow to be admired, as, indeed, it would have been a pity had she not, so exquisitely pretty were they.

"Don't you see the charming compliment he pays you, Elfie? meaning to say that in any colour you put on, you look so well that one fancies it is in that you look your best?"

"Oh, that is what he meant. I am not, you know, much used to compliments—from my husband."

"Who would think," continued Allan, laboriously striving to speak lightly, "that in this peach-blossom-clad fairy, one sees the heroine of the hunting-field? Can you fancy her riding a whole day, enduring fatigue that quite knocks me up, flying over ditches and taking fences at which old huntsmen demur?"

"Why should I tire of riding more than a bird tires of flying? Sir Granton Brakespear says—"

Here Allan interposed with harsh voice and rude abruptness, removing his arm from round Elfie. At the naming of this name his whole aspect had changed, as if by magic.

"Miss Hammond will not care to hear you quote the words of that old reprobate any more than I do. Miss Hammond knows, as I do, that Sir Granton Brakespear is—"

"He is an old darling!" cried Elfie, one sparkle of animation. "With his white head and his white moustache, and his fiery dark eyes, and his fine manners, and his courtly compliments, he is an old darling! I admire him immensely, Aunt Hammond; and he more than returns my admiration."

I frowned at Elfie but did not know what to say. Elfie went on in her airiest manner—

"Sir Granton Brakespear says that he has never seen any lady whose riding could compare with mine. And, Aunt

Hammond, do you know, he has a beautiful black horse, which he considers perfect, he has called it the Elfin King, and it is all black, except for just one white star on its forehead, and this horse he wants me to persuade Allan to let me ride. He says, that the horse being perfection, to see it ridden by perfection, and to perfection, would be a fine thing. A thing worth the whole county's coming together to see."

Allan having had time partly to recover himself, tried to subdue the firmness of his manner to gentleness as he said,

"I thought—I hoped—we had done with this subject, Elfie. I have told you every time you have touched upon it that nothing will ever win from me my permission that you should ride a horse belonging to Sir Granton Brakespear, and that, if you should ever ride it without my permission, you would do what I could never forgive."

"Oh yes, I know you have told me so; but even you sometimes alter, and there is my side of the question to be considered as well as yours." She was bending over my stand of hyacinths in the window and playing with them as she spoke. "When I told Sir Granton what you said, he only laughed, and answered, that he could not imagine any man ever persistently denying me anything; and that he had no doubt I should ultimately succeed in getting you to retract so arbitrary an edict. So you will have to retract it, you see, Allan, because, as Sir Granton knows, I have set my heart on riding his Elfin King, it would be very unpleasant for me—would look as if you didn't care for me, if I were not allowed to do it. It would look as if I hadn't the influence over you that every young and pretty woman—and I *am* pretty, you know—has a right to expect to have over her husband. I shouldn't like anyone to think that, Allan; of course I shouldn't."

I felt sure now that Elfie was taking advantage of the protection of my presence, to renew an old subject of dispute, and to make a fresh attempt, which she would hardly have dared make had she been alone with Allan, to get her own way.

"The old scoundrel," exclaimed Allan, recognising of course that part of what Elfie said was said by rote; after which exclamation he muttered to himself words that I am sure ought to have shocked me had I distinguished them.

Elfie meanwhile had broken off my finest hyacinth, which happened to match

the colour of her dress; and now came to the mirror to try the effect of it twisted in her hair. As she thus occupied herself, she said, with an affectation of vain and foolish confidence, which the expression of her face as I saw it in the mirror contradicted,

"Allan is going to be a dear kind darling. He means to let me do what I have set my whole heart on doing. I know he does."

"Never," thundered Allan. "Heaven help me, but I would sooner see you dead than riding that old scoundrel's favourite."

Elfie dropped her flower, my best hyacinth, of which I had been proud. It seemed to me, when I thought about it afterwards, somewhat significant, that Allan, even in that excitement, mechanically—I don't at all suppose he knew what he was doing—picked up the flower and laid it on the table.

Elfie now subsided into a chair close to me; she had grown slightly pale, she looked up at Allan half in what seemed like childish dismay, half in outraged elfin majesty. He began to walk stormily to and fro in the room, her gaze followed him; when he came to a pause close in front of her she shrank back, but it was to me he spoke,

"Miss Hammond, try and make my wife understand how impossible it is that I should grant her request, and why it is so absolutely impossible. Ten times, at least, we have gone over this ground. Ten times, at least, I have thought I had made her understand. And yet, you hear how she speaks about it! Is it that she cannot or that she will not understand me? Is she inconceivably foolish or incredibly obstinate? Tell her plainly, Miss Hammond, the sort of things people would say of any young and lovely woman who laid herself under obligation to that old man. And of Elfie, whom all the women envy, evil will be twice as quickly spoken, twice as readily believed, as of any other."

"But, Allan, I am not wanting to be under any obligation to Sir Granton—he wants to see me ride the Elfin King much more even than I want to ride it." The way in which Allan had ended gave Elfie courage to speak.

"He wants to see you ride to the devil much more even than you want to go there yourself!" was Allan's savagely contemptuous answer to her silly plaintively spoken words, and then he left the room, and walking up and down my garden-

paths smoked one cigar after another, and tried to walk and to smoke off his irritation.

Elfie sat looking blank and—not idiotic, that is too strong a word, but slightly daft. "How can any sensible person put himself in such a way about such a trifle!" were her first words.

I tried to do, to the best of my power, what was expected of me. I told Elfie in pretty plain terms what was likely to be believed of a woman whom Sir Granton Brakespear singled out for his attentions. I told her that he was a vile sham, with his outside of chivalry and courtliness for women, while inwardly he was a very devil towards them, seeking whom he might devour.

Fairly launched on my subject I spoke with heat and emphasis, and at some length. When I had ended, Mistress Elfie, putting her hands up to her temples said, still more plaintively than she had spoken just now to her husband,

"Oh dear, what a great to-do you and Allan make about such a simple thing! Sir Granton may not be quite a proper person, but he is very pleasant, and what possible harm can he do me when my husband is by my side? I shan't say anything more about it just now, but I shall not give up the hope of getting Allan, some day when he is in a very good humour, to consent to my riding the Elfin King. It does seem such a sad pity to make such a fuss about trifles, and not to let me do what I want so much to do, and what is in itself so harmless and innocent! I don't attach very much importance to what you have been saying, Aunt Hammond, because you always exaggerate when you get excited, and you seem very excited about this." Elfie, sighing, looked as serenely wise and superior as foolishness could look.

"If I were your husband, Elfie, and had a temper no better than I have now, I could easily fancy I might one day be provoked into wringing that pretty white throat of yours, or strangling you with a rope of your own hair, as one of your modern poets makes a lover strangle his lady."

"Perhaps Allan will one day do something of the kind," replied Elfie. "His face sometimes looks just like the face of the executioner in the picture of the beheading of Lady Jane Grey. When we were having some Tableaux at Braithwait, we chose that picture for one. It

was soon after we came home, before Allan got so angry with poor Edgar, and he, I mean Edgar, had arranged it all. Of course I was Lady Jane, and Edgar, with a wig to make him look old, was the kind priest, or whatever he is, who is guiding Lady Jane's hands to rest upon the block, and Allan was to be the executioner. But I happened to look up at him, standing half behind me leaning on his axe, just before I put myself into position—they hadn't bandaged my eyes for the rehearsal—and I took a panic. I jumped up, and I wouldn't have that picture done. It was something I saw in Allan's face frightened me, yet he didn't look angry."

"It seems to me it would have been very poor taste to make a plaything of such a harrowing bit of pathos."

"So Allan said; he was glad we gave it up."

At this moment Hannah came in with the afternoon tea-tray.

"I'm glad to see the tea," said Elsie, "for I've got a bad head-ache. My head feels as if you and Allan had been knocking it about. I should think Allan must have a head-ache, too. Hannah had better call him in to have some tea. I never used to have head-aches," sighed Elsie. "But now I'm always having them."

In the course of that evening, while Elsie was playing Bézique with me, Allan dropped off to sleep. The newspaper he had been reading folded on his knee, his head leant back against his chair, he seemed to sleep profoundly, and in that sleep, his head so thrown back, he looked so ill, so death-like, that I called Elsie's attention to it.

"Asleep?" she questioned. "Not very polite of him, is it, Aunt Hammond? But I don't think he sleeps well at night."

"Don't you see how ill he looks, Elsie? How thin he has grown? How sallow and sunken his face is?"

"He can't be very strong, certainly," she said, "for when we have been riding, often, when I am not the least tired, he seems completely what he calls used up."

"He certainly is not strong, he certainly is not well. Any man who looks like that in his sleep must have something serious the matter with him."

"You speak to me as if it were my fault! Can I help it?"

"Heaven only knows."

No more passed just then, but her eyes presently wandered back to his face.

"Poor fellow!" she said presently. "I know you think he is not happy. Well, sometimes lately I have wondered whether, for him, it might not be a fortunate accident if I were to get killed in the hunting field, as he seems to think I shall be. I have wondered whether then, after a time, he would marry Angela. I have wondered whether, if he did, he would be happy."

"He was quite free to have married her, had he chosen, when he chose you, Elsie."

"But then, because I am so lovely to look at, he believed me to be an angel: now he knows what I am: he would not choose me again. What a pity it seems," she added, with quite a thoughtful fold on her forehead, "that for a mistake of that kind people should have to suffer all their lives. Yes," she concluded, "if I died, if I were killed, he would marry Angela. But I don't want to die, I don't want to be killed, I don't want him to marry Angela."

In this way Elsie touched the deepest mysteries of death, and life, and love, and sorrow!

But something of softened thoughtfulness had overspread her face, and her voice had something in it different from its usual clear thinness of chirping intonation. After a moment, too, she stole softly to her husband's side, and, one hand under his chin, one on the top of his head, kissed him on the mouth. He woke in wonder, and then she spoiled the pretty action, asking—

"Were you dreaming, Allan? And did you think it was Angela?"

Why such a question should anger him she seemed unable to understand, and she showed herself aggrieved that he was not flattered by her kiss, and grateful for it.

Oh dear, oh dear, how tired I was when they left me, how glad that they should go home! And yet I was half afraid to think of them as left alone, together, at home.

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